

Message Text

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22

ACTION ACDA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-11 ISO-00 ERDA-05 SP-02 OES-03 FEA-01

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DODE-00 /067 W

----- 073947

R 052308Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7436

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 0900

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, TECH, AS

SUBJECT: RE-ASSESSMENT OF AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDES ON SITING OF
MULTINATIONAL NUCLEAR CENTER

REFS: 75 CANBERRA 4456, STATE 005771, STATE 026115

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY IS ABLE AT THIS POINT TO GIVE ONLY
INTERIM RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT REQUEST FOR
REASSESSMENT THIS QUESTION. LIBERAL-NATIONAL COUNTRY PARTY
(L-NCP) GOVERNMENT POLICY ON VARIETY OF RELATED TOPICS CUR-
RENTLY UNDER REVIEW AND RESULTS ONLY NOW BECOMING KNOWN.
WE SEE NO REASON, HOWEVER, SUBSTANTIALLY TO MODIFY CONCLUSION
REPORTED CANBERRA 4456 THAT AUSTRALIA MERITS SERIOUS CON-
SIDERATION AS POSSIBLE SITE FOR MNC DESPITE NUMBER OF
DIFFICULT POLITICAL AND EMOTIONAL ISSUES TO BE
DEALTH WITH. END SUMMARY.

2. INDICATION OF SLOW PROGRESS OF L-NCP REVIEW OF POLICY
RELATED TO DEPARTMENT'S INQUIRY IS FACT THAT ONLY ON
FEBRUARY 3, ALMOST TWO MONTHS FOLLOWING ELECTION, MINISTER
FOR NATIONAL RESOURCES AND OVERSEAS TRADE ANTHONY MADE FIRST
COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT TO PRESS ON MINERALS AND ENERGY POLICY
(BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY). THAT ANTHONY EVEN THEN WAS
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INADEQUATELY BRIEFED IS INDICATED BY FACT HE STATED

GOA POLICY WAS NOT TO EXPORT URANIUM OXIDE TO NON-SIGNATORIES NPT. WE INFORMED BY DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON FOLLOWING DAY THAT THIS INACCURATE AND WOULD LATER BE CLARIFIED.

3. SOME SUGGESTION THAT PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON URANIUM EXPLOITATION WILL BE RELAXED WAS PROVIDED BY L-NCP URANIUM POLICY STATEMENT ISSUED FEBRUARY 1 IN WHICH FORMER CONNOR GOAL THAT URANIUM BE EXPORTED ONLY IN LOCALLY ENRICHED FORM APPARENTLY REVERSED. WHILE STUDIES OF FEASIBILITY OF DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIAN ENRICHMENT PLAN WILL CONTINUE (AND WILL PROBABLY BE AMONG TOPICS CONSIDERED AT DISCUSSIONS WITH JAPANESE CURRENTLY TAKING PLACE), EXPORT OF YELLOW CAKE WILL BE PERMITTED, ACCORDING TO STATEMENT. WE NONETHELESS BELIEVE IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO EXTRAPOLATE FROM THIS THAT THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN LONG-TERM PROSPECTS FOR SITING OF MNC IN AUSTRALIA. SENSITIVITIES WITH RESPECT TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES REMAIN AND, IF ANYTHING, MIGHT BE MORE TROUBLESOME IF SIEZED UPON BY AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY IN OPPOSITION AS PART OF EFFORT TO EMBARRASS L-NCP COALITION AND REGAIN POWER IN SHORT, ALTHOUGH WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTES MAJOR DIFFERENCE IN CIRCUMSTANCES PREVAILING SINCE CANBERRA 4456 WAS DRAFTED, WE BELIEVE CENTRAL THRUST OF THAT MESSAGE REMAINS BASICALLY VALID. WE WILL HAVE OCCASSION LATE THIS MONTH WHEN ERDA SAFEGUARDS TEAM VISITS AUSTRALIA TO BE IN CONTACT WITH GOA ON GENERAL SUBJECT OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS. WE WILL BE ALERT FOR ANY INDICATIONS WHICH MIGHT BEAR ON THIS SUBJECT (ALTHOUGH WE WILL NOT OF COURSE RAISE SPECIFIC TOPIC OF POSSIBLE MNC IN AUSTRALIA. MEANWHILE, WE BELIEVE INTER-AGENCY MEETING SHOULD CONTINUE USE CANBERRA 4456 AS BASIS FOR DISCUSSION.

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